

PUBLIC HEARING – February 15, 2013
Education Committee

Raised Bill No. 6385

An Act Prohibiting the use of Pesticides at Schools - **OPPOSED**

As the Parks Superintendent for the Town of Glastonbury, I know that the complete elimination of the use of pesticides will increase the cost to maintain the fields at my schools even as the playing conditions deteriorate because of pest pressure. This in turn will not make the fields safer, but more dangerous.

The products I have used have passed muster with the EPA, FIFRA, DEP and the FDA. They are being scrutinized by the CDC as well they should be. Independent university scientists have published double blind, peer reviewed research on all these products.

Good science means good legislation. The arguments to pass this bill are full of emotion and lacking in good science. Of all the committees in the legislature, I would like to think that the Education Committee would value educated scientific research when making decisions. Our own flagship university along with every other public university performing research in this area advocates for the IPM model which uses tested and registered pesticides judiciously to control pest pressure. The many scientists within the university, at the Ct Agricultural Experiment Station, CT DEEP, and the CT Public Health Department have cooperatively sat on an ad hoc task force to try and tackle problems caused by the current ban on pesticides at K-8 schools. Almost unanimously, they agreed that there are far more problems with unregulated materials allowed in the ban than there are by practicing IPM as it is defined by academia – certainly not as newly defined in this bill.

I have attended the training classes that were sponsored this past year by NOFA in hopes of finding the “magic bullet”. Their program is full of good ideas and I compliment them on the use of the many inputs that my IPM program also institutes. However, their invited speakers from the CT Experiment Station and Rutgers University, advise that in some situations pesticides will be needed to keep pest pressure below acceptable levels.

Hardest to endure are those who have jumped on the bandwagon of this holistic approach and claim to have even better natural controls. They make claims of being able to grow premium turfgrass fields without pesticides but all their answers are “proprietary”. These wolves in sheep’s clothing have alluded that the EPA, the DEP and every other regulating agency is in the back pocket of the pesticide manufacturers. They also disparage the university researchers, and the professors who taught me and wrote my textbooks. All the information but theirs is flawed, they say. The message I have heard is that the only truth lays with these charlatans, and they have the answers, but have spent a lifetime finding them and they will mete them out in due time – for a fee, an additional one beyond that of the conference or workshop.

There are good people on both sides of this issue who have the safety and health of children in mind just as I do. We will continue to see new pesticides and find natural methods for control and I intend to be on the forefront of implementing these measures. I ask for your confidence in me and in the many educated people striving to keep the athletic fields safe and enjoyable for our athletes. Please let good science and sound laws rule the day!

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to express my concern about this bill.

Sincerely,

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